TEXTILE MUSEUM JOURNAL

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CONTENTS

COVER: Detail of a batik sarong made in the factory of Elizabeth van Zuylen; North Java, ca. 1900 Textile Museum 1979.6.9 Gift of R.T. Hardjonagoro

TEXTILE MOUNTING

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INTRODUCTION

Ancient and contemporary textiles have a universal appeal. They are being exhibited more frequently in galleries and museums, and are finding their way into the homes of private collectors and connoisseurs. There is a recognized need for information on the care of varieties of textiles and a growing interest in the most suitable methods for mounting and display. Some very basic techniques of preparation and mounting can be helpful to both the professional conservator and the layman.

It is important that textiles to be mounted for an exhibit be clean. In museums they are usually taken from a storage area, having been washed or cleaned prior to storage. If, however, the textiles to be exhibited are from sources other than museums, they have to be carefully examined to determine their condition and to ensure that they are clean. Textiles from individual or private collections must be processed through a fumigation chamber before moving them into the museum's conservation laboratory.

TEMPORARY MOUNTING TECHNIQUES

Rugs, tapestries and other large hangings that are fairly sturdy can be quick-mounted for temporary display by sewing a cotton twill tape to the top back of the piece (Figure 1). This should be done from edge to edge with small stitches, turning the tape under at either end.

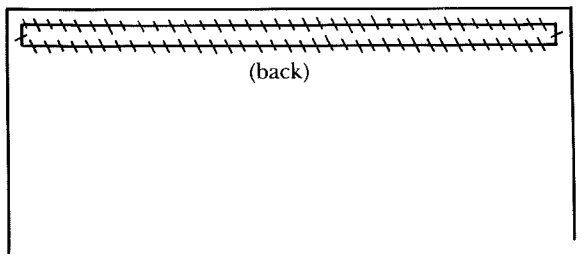


Fig. 1. Tape sewn on the back of the rug.

When the tape is in place it should be measured and marked off at four- or five-inch intervals and rings sewn on to the tape at these points. The rings should be stitched to the tape at the base of the ring as well as on either side of the ring (Figure 2 a and b).

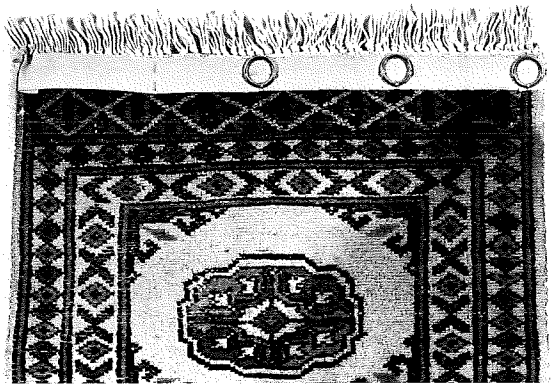


Fig. 2 a. Back of a rug showing cotton twill tape and rings.

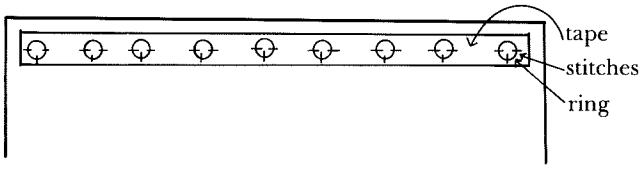


Fig. 2 b. Tape and rings sewn on the back of a rug.

After the tape and rings are in place, the textile can be hung. At the Textile Museum a 2" x 4" board is hung by wire from the wall, the length of the board being the same as the width of the object to be hung. Nails are driven into the board at the same measured distances as the rings on the tape, and the textile is hung by slipping the rings over the nails. The top of the textile will cover the board and the piece will hang straight with the weight evenly distributed.

For textiles that are too weak or fragile to be hung by tape and rings, mounting on a well-braced wooden stretch frame is necessary. This can be done by edge-to-edge mounting or border mounting on a stretch frame (Figure 3 a and b), as explained below.

EDGE TO EDGE STRETCH FRAME MOUNTING

The textile should be accurately measured and the frame constructed to these exact dimensions. For larger pieces, the frame needs to be braced with one or more cross bars. Material (unbleached muslin) should be cut 2 to 2½ inches larger than the dimension of the frame. Place the frame on the unbleached muslin and stretch the material, pinning it to two adjacent sides of the frame. Staple the material on the frame along the two pinned sides. Turn the frame around and stretch the material very tightly over the remaining two sides of the frame, pinning it tautly to the sides of the frame (to maintain maximum tension) and staple these two remaining sides to the back of the frame. The fabric on the frame should now be very tight, and, when tapped, it should sound like a drum.

The textile can now be placed on top of the covered frame, pinned edge to edge, stretching the textile to the exact dimensions of the frame (Figure 4 a). The textile should be stitched to the edge of the frame with very small stitches, taking with the needle a little of the unbleached muslin from the edge of the frame and sewing over one warp or weft of the textile. Using this method, continue stitching until the entire piece is attached to the muslin covered frame (Figure 4 b).

If the piece is large, additional sewing should be done corner to corner and through the center of the piece to attach the piece firmly to the muslin, further supporting the weight and eliminating air bubbles (Figure 4 c).

The method and amount of stitching on the frame should be determined by the condition of the textile. If the piece is in good condition and strong, it should be stitched as

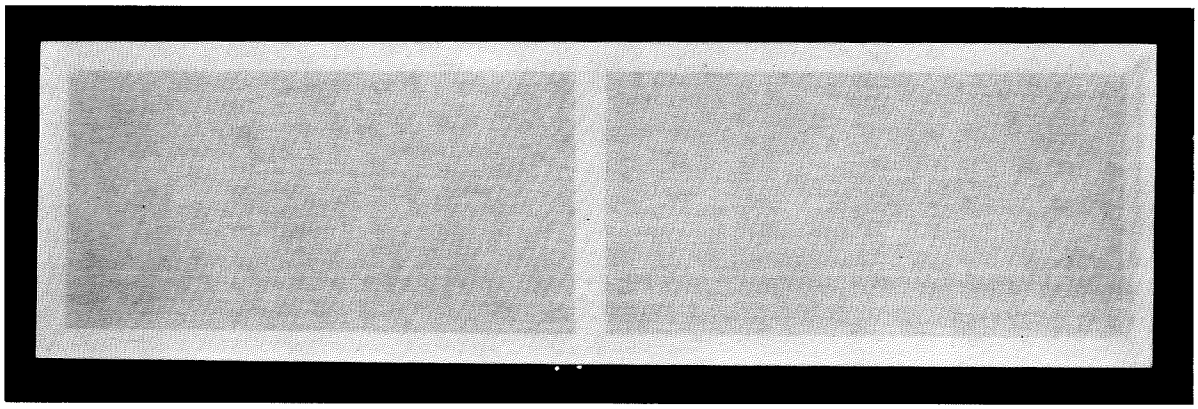


Fig. 3 a. Front of a stretched frame.

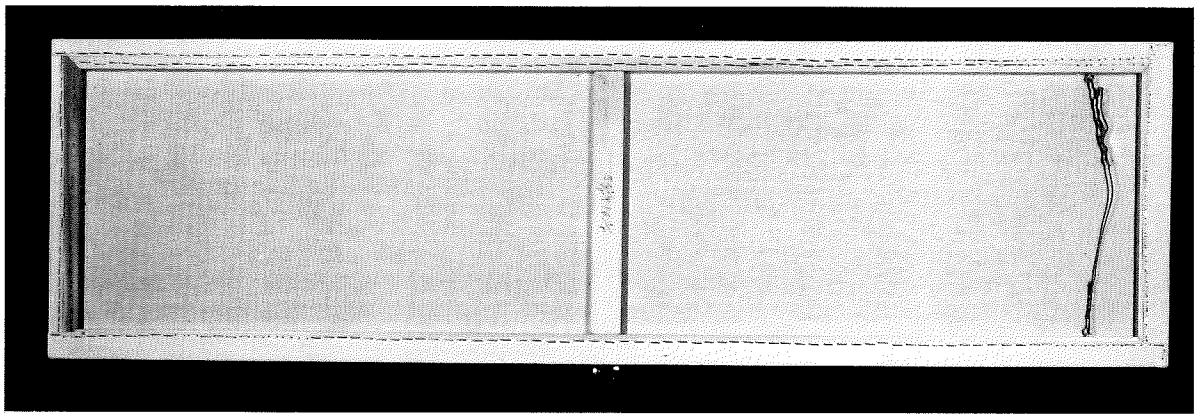


Fig. 3 b. Back of a stretched frame showing stapled edges of the fabric.

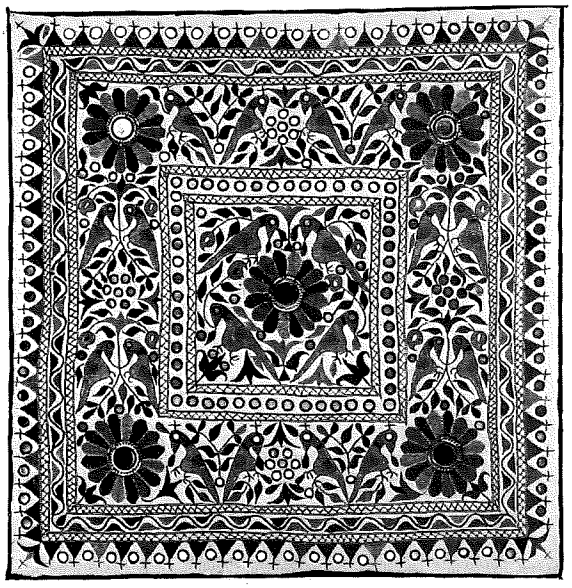
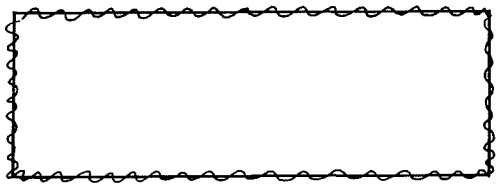
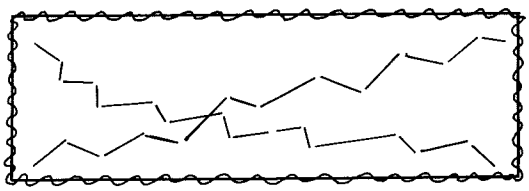


Fig. 4 a. Complete textile mounted from edge to edge.



Small to Medium Weight Piece

Fig. 4 b. Stitching on edge-to-edge frame, front.



Large Piece (from back)

Fig. 4 c. Stitching on edge-to-edge frame, showing floating stitches.

described above. If, however, the textile is fragile, less stitching should be done, and the stitches should be far apart.

The best thread to use for this kind of mounting is soft cotton and, if needed, taken double. Silks should be sewn with silk thread or human hair, which is ideally suited to fragile textiles as it is invisible, long lasting and does not cut the threads in the textile.

BORDER MOUNTING

When the textile is small, irregular in shape, a fragment, a garment, or, for any reason would not cover a frame effectively from edge to edge, then a border of the background can be shown, usually about 2 to 4 inches in width. In this case, the textile to be mounted should be considered when selecting the material to cover the stretch frame. Different colors of cotton can enhance the effect of the piece to be displayed. Silk or linen pieces may look best on silk. Monks cloth and linen can also be used effectively although linen absorbs moisture from the air and must be pre-shrunk. After preparing the stretch frame (see page) the piece is placed on top of the frame and sewn onto the backing with small stitches along the outline of the object. If there are loose threads or breaks in the textile, they should be couched over onto the backing. Since these are pieces temporarily mounted to be placed on exhibit, the amount of sewing should be minimal.

Usually these pieces are removed from the stretch frame following the exhibit, rolled up, and put back into storage. For this reason no permanent mounting should be done on stretch frames unless the textile is to remain on the frame and stored in that condition.

PERMANENT MOUNTING TECHNIQUES

Pre-Columbian, Coptic, and other ancient textiles or fragments are mounted for permanent exhibit, storage, or study using the following techniques.

Preparation:

Five pieces of fabric are required for each mount, one for each member of the wooden stretcher and one backing piece (Figure 5 a). Each piece of fabric should be cut so that the grain of the fabric runs in the same direction on the finished mount (Figure 5 b). The backing piece should be cut approximately 3″ larger in both dimensions than the size of the stretcher. The fabric for the side members should be cut about 1½″ longer than the length of the member; to determine the width of the fabric, measure the distance around the

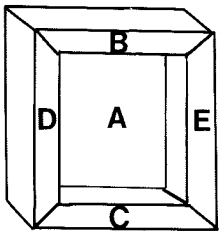


Fig. 5 a.

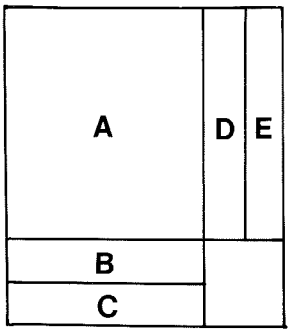


Fig. 5 b.

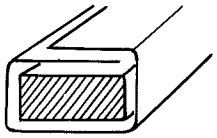


Fig. 5 c.

member and add to that length the equivalent of about ¾ of the width of the member (Figure 5 c).

Covering the stretcher:

1. Apply glue to the back and outer edge of one of the stretcher members, extending glue about three quarters of an inch along the edges of the adjacent members (Figure 6). It is important that the glue be applied evenly or the fabric will buckle upon drying.

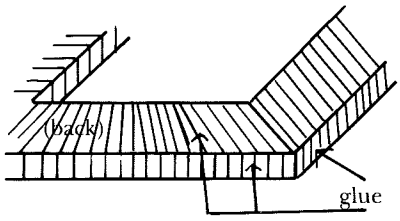
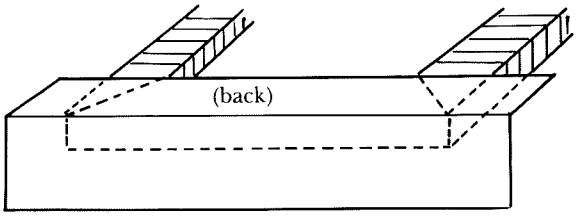


Fig. 6.

2. Center the edge of the fabric at the inner edge of the member; the edge of the fabric should be very cleanly cut and aligned exactly with the stretcher edge. Press the fabric onto the back surface and the outer edge, both of which have been glued (Figure 7 a). Cut the loose end along the fold to the stretcher's corner. Fold the side flap to the glued edge of the adjacent stretcher member (Figure 7 b).



3. Trim away the areas shaded in Figure 7 b, above, by cutting along the corner fold and along the stretcher (Figure 8). Prepare the other corner in the same manner.

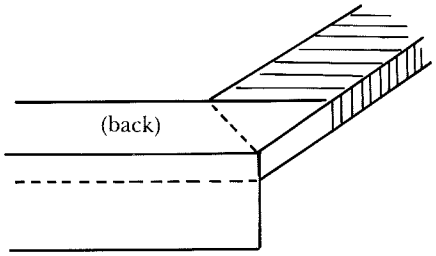


Fig. 8.

4. Repeat steps 1 to 3 on the stretcher member opposite the one just prepared.

5. Turn the stretcher over so that it is face up on the table. Pull the fabric across the front surface and on each side trim away area shaded in Figure 9.

6. Apply glue to the front surface and inner edge of the stretcher member. Press the fabric onto these surfaces. Using a fingernail, press the edge of the fabric into the inner corner of the stretcher (Figure 10).

7. Repeat steps 5 and 6 on the opposite member.

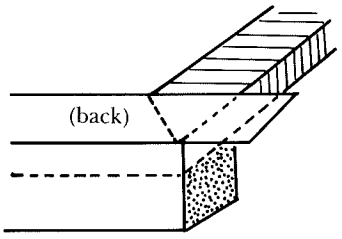


Fig. 7 b.

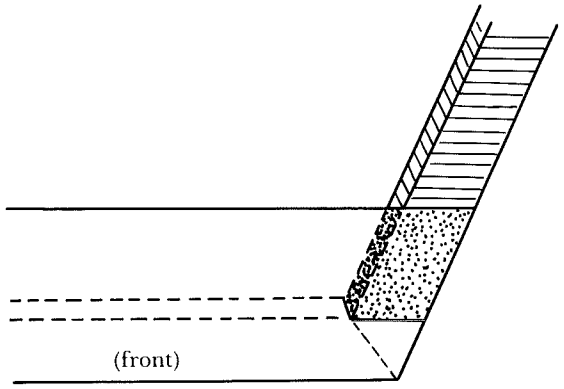


Fig. 9.

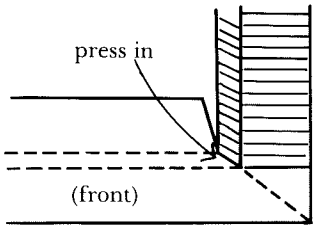


Fig. 10.

8. Turn the stretcher face down on the table. The final flap is glued to the back face of the member (Figure 11). This should be repeated on the opposite member. These two members should now be completely covered.

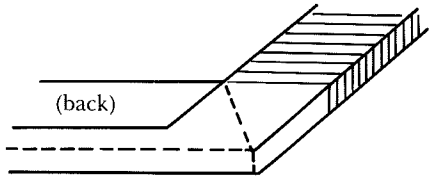


Fig. 11.

9. Keeping the stretcher face down on the table, begin covering the other two members. Apply glue to the back face and the outer edge (Figure 12).

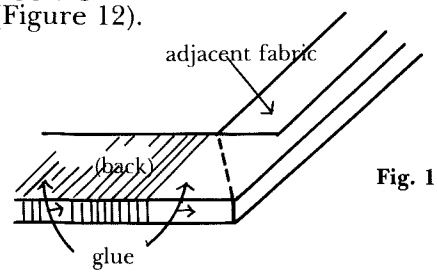


Fig. 12.

10. Place the fabric so that the edge corresponds to the outer edge of the adjacent member and align the other fabric edge exactly with the inner edge of the stretcher member, as shown in Figure 13. Press fabric into place on the glue.

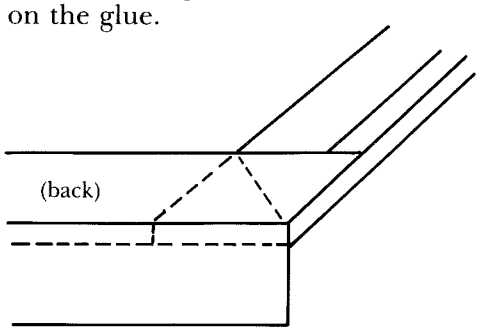


Fig. 13.

11. Once glued in place, trim the excess length of fabric from the other end of the member.

12. Repeat steps 9 to 11 on the opposite stretcher member.

13. Turn the stretcher face up on the table. Pull the fabric over the front surface. Clip as shown in Figure 14.

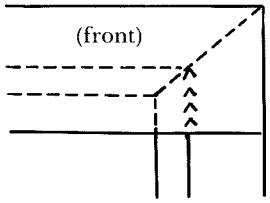


Fig. 14.

14. Fold back the outer flap, making the fold between the outer and inner corners of the stretcher. Cut away the fabric, shown in the shaded area below, cleanly along the fold (Figure 15 a and b).

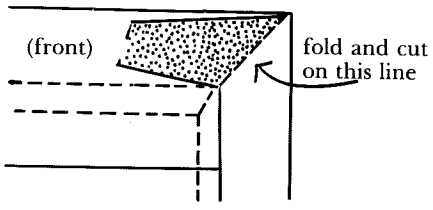


Fig. 15, a.

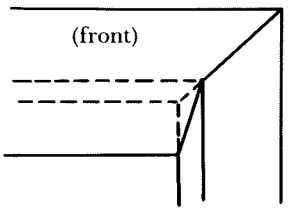


Fig. 15, b.

15. Apply glue to the front surface and inner edge of the member. Press the fabric into place on the glue. At the inner corner, press the edge of the fabric into the corner as shown in step 6.

16. Repeat steps 13 to 15 on the opposite stretcher member.

17. Turn the stretcher face down on the table. Glue the remaining flap to the back surface of the member (Figure 16). Repeat on the opposite member and the stretcher should now be completely covered.

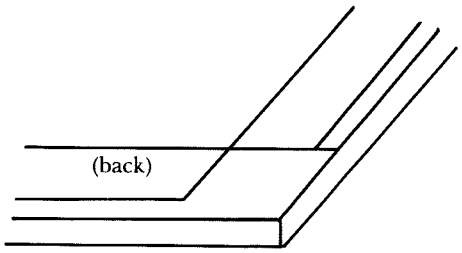


Fig. 16.

Applying the backing piece:

The textile is mounted directly on the backing piece after it has been stretched taut and wrinkle-free on the covered stretcher frame.

1. Place the stretcher face down. Place the corner of the fabric on the outer corner of the stretcher. Using a staple gun and stainless steel staples, secure the corner of the fabric to the stretcher (Figure 17).

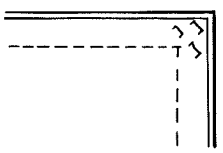


Fig. 17.

2. Moving from the secured corner, staple the adjacent edges to the stretcher. Staples should be closely spaced in a staggered, not a straight, line to avoid the increased possibility of the fabric's pulling out. If necessary, a few stick-pins may be used to insure proper alignment of these two edges.

3. Once the two sides have been secured, the fabric is stretched to tautness along the remaining two edges. Begin by securing the remaining open corner with stick pins (Figure 18, a). Stick pins should be placed in the edge of the stretcher, not on the face. Pin the fabric

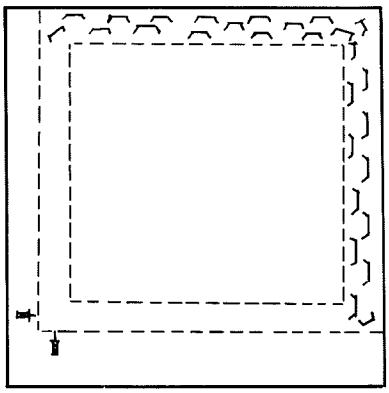


Fig. 18 a.

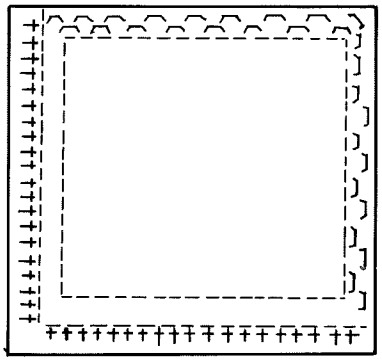


Fig. 18 b.

to the edges of the stretcher while pulling the fabric taut (Figure 18 b). Watch while doing this, making certain that the threads of the fabric are parallel to the stretcher edges.

4. Staple the final two sides and remove the pins.

5. If desired the loose fabric may be trimmed. It is suggested, however, that the fabric be left intact and folded over to the front of the stretcher where it can be used to protect the front surface of the stretcher during the mounting of the textile (Figure 19 a).

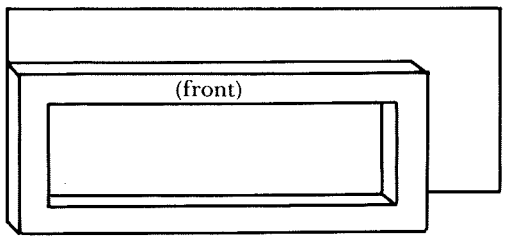


Fig. 19 a.

Scraps of fabric can be attached with masking tape over the remaining two sides of the stretcher for their protection. Once the textile has been mounted, the protective strips are removed and the excess fabric trimmed away (Figure 19 b and c).

Completing the mount:

1. A piece of pegboard is cut to the size of the stretcher, and a piece of flannel, cut to size, is attached with spots of glue to the pegboard. With the flannel against the backing fabric, the pegboard is attached to the stretcher by screws in the corners.

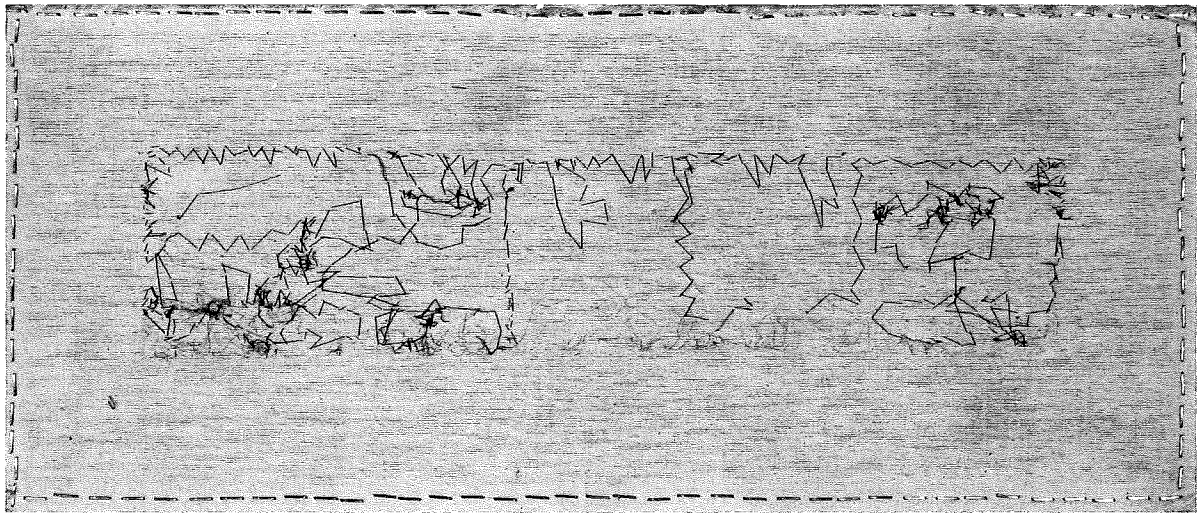


Fig. 19 b. Back view of frame showing stitching of mounted textile.

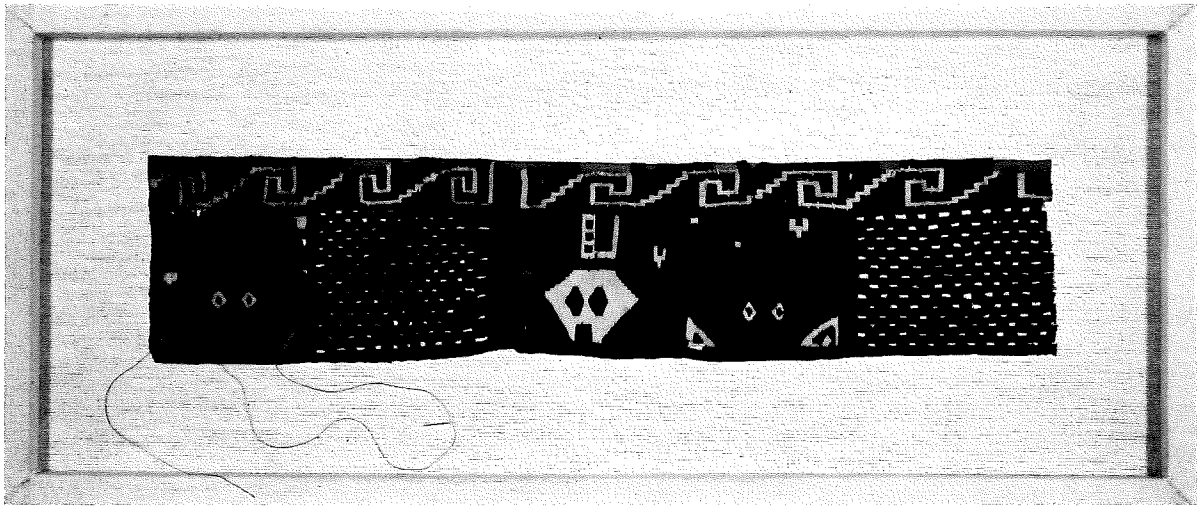


Fig. 19 c. Front view of mounted textile.

2. A piece of U-V filtering plexiglass (UF–3) is cut to the size of the stretcher and placed across the front.

3. A frame is built to secure the plexiglass to the mount (Figure 20 a, b, and c).

VARIATIONS:

Mounting on silk

Mounting on silk requires the use of two layers of fabric. Cover the stretcher with unbleached muslin as described above. Do not attach the backing piece. The entire process is repeated with silk, with one important exception: the silk can be glued only on the back of the stretcher. When securing the front and corners of the silk, the sides are mitered at the corners, leaving a slight excess of fabric. This extra fabric is turned under and the two pieces of silk are secured to one another by slip stitching (Figure 21).

The backing, likewise, is of two layers of

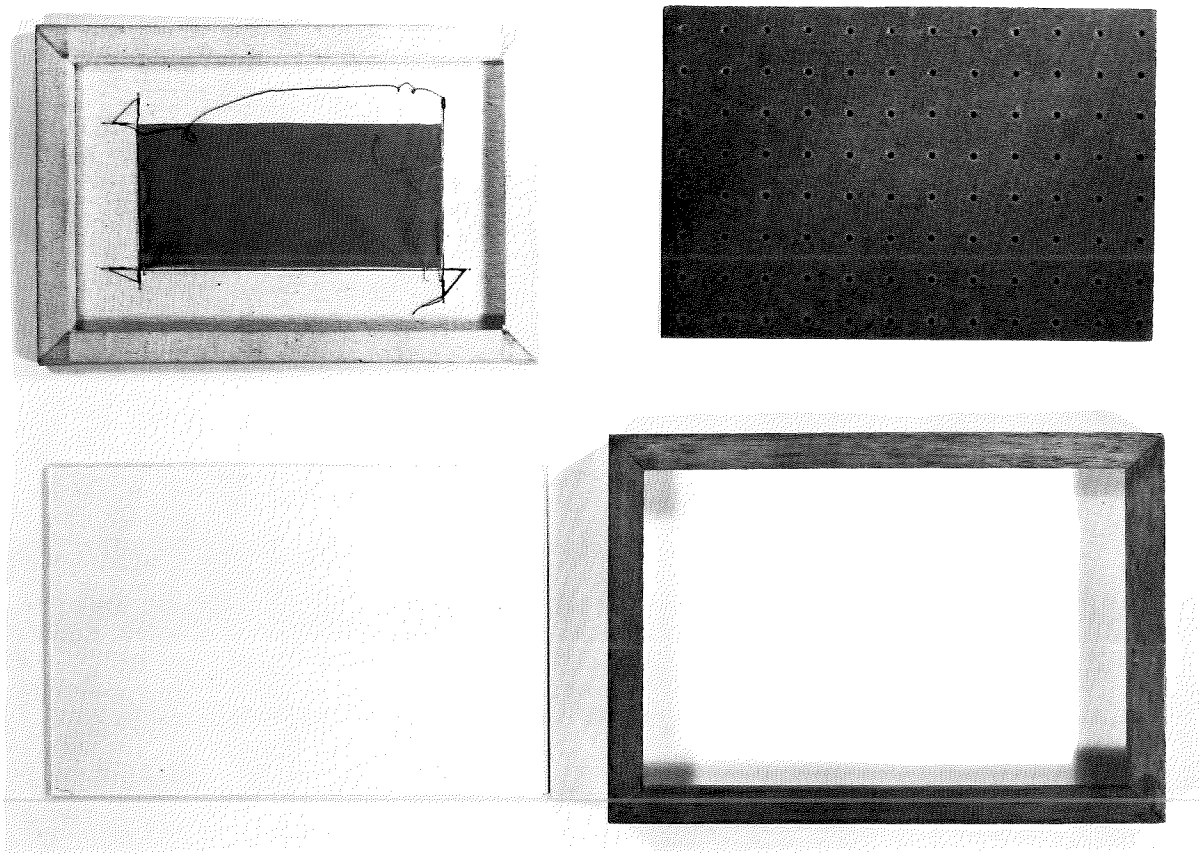


Fig. 20 a. The four parts of a mount: frame, pegboard, plexiglass, and overframe.

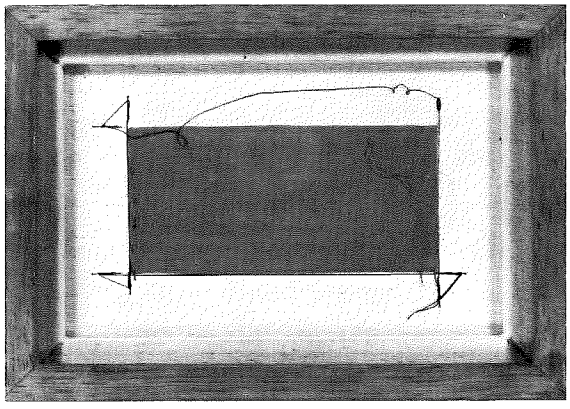


Fig. 20 b. Complete mount.

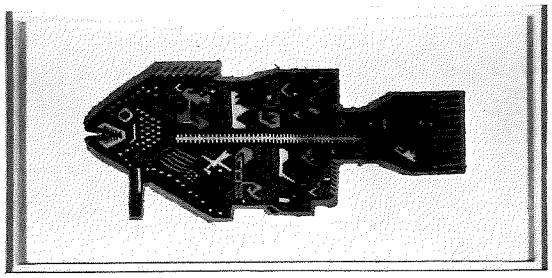


Fig. 20 c. Complete mount with a textile.

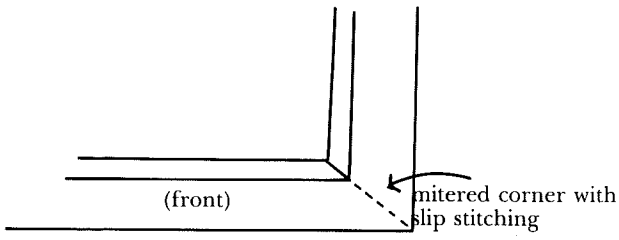


Fig. 21.

fabric. The silk and muslin are attached simultaneously and stretched simultaneously. Extra care must be taken to be certain that both fabrics are equally taut and wrinkle free.

Mounting for viewing from both sides

On occasion a textile must be mounted so that it can be viewed from both sides; for example, a silk flag which has been painted on both sides or an important textile which will be used for study purposes. In such a case, two stretch frames are needed, each being stretched from edge to edge with crepolin (silk illusion) using the same method for covering the frame as that described on p. 3. Because the crepolin is fragile, a cotton tape can be used to reinforce it where it is stapled to the wood.

After the crepolin is stapled in place, the textile should be centered on one of the frames and sewn to the crepolin with a fine silk thread or, if the piece is particularly delicate, human hair. When the textile is sewn in place, the second crepolin frame is placed on top, with the crepolin directly against the textile. Two sheets of plexiglass can now be placed on either side of the mount and held together with a frame or clips (Figure 22).

If only a small section of the back of a

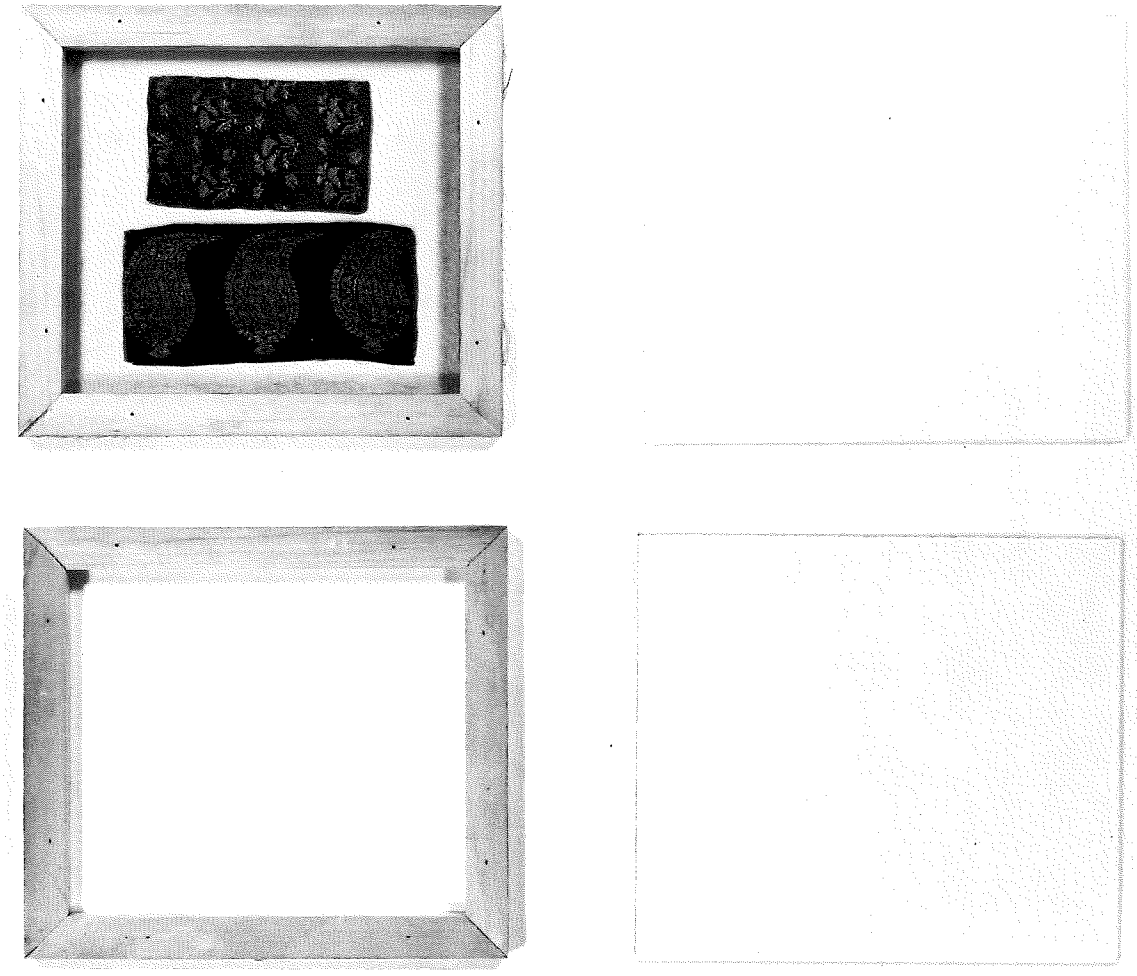


Fig. 22. The four parts of a mount that allows a textile to be viewed from the back as well as the front: two frames with crepolin and two sheets of plexiglass.

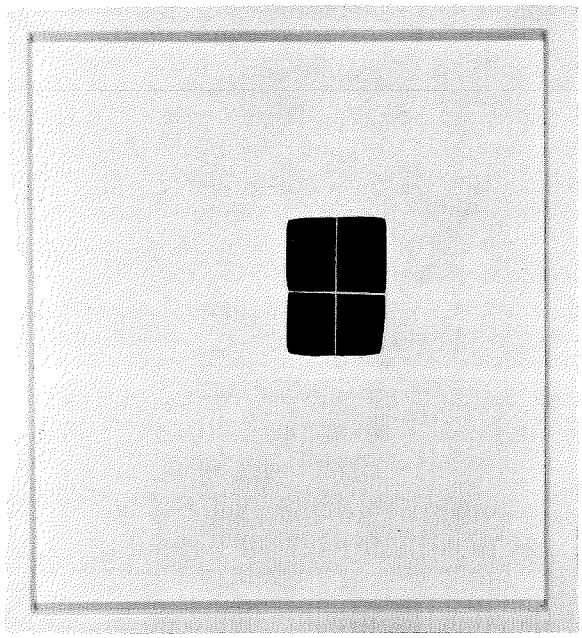


Fig. 23 a. Back before peg board in place.

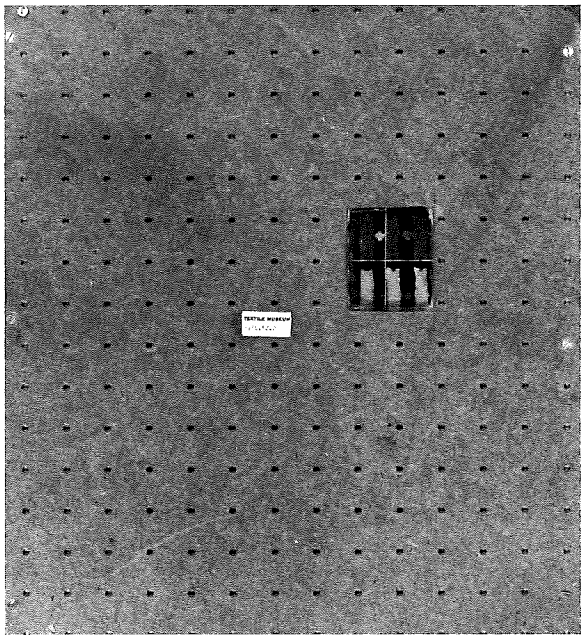


Fig. 23 b. Back of final mount.

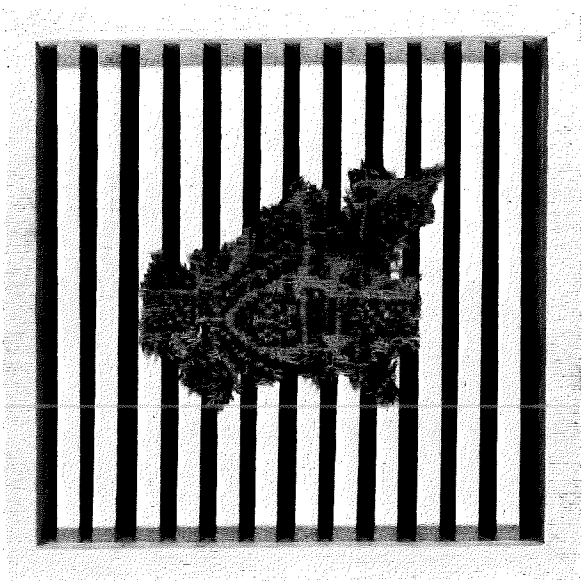


Fig. 24 a. Front.

Fig. 24 b. Back.

textile needs to be viewed, the mounting can be done using the technique described for permanent mounts, by cutting a hole in the backing fabric and in the peg board and flannel. Note that the hole in the backing fabric must be reinforced with heavy crossed threads to withstand the tension (Figure 23 a–b).

Another method used to mount textiles to be viewed from both sides is shown in the photos below. Instead of a stretched fabric backing, the textile is mounted on fabric-covered slats set in a frame (Figure 24 a–b).